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(SOVIET OIL)

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- A CONSUMER GROUP TODAY  
INTELLIGENCE AGENCY TO OBTAIN DATA SUPPORTING  
PREDICTIONS THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL SOON  
SCARCE WORLD OIL SUPPLIES.

ALTHOUGH CIA SOURCES AND METHODS ARE EXEMPTED FROM  
THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, THE SUIT CONTENDED THE AGENCY  
BREACHED ITS OWN CONFIDENCE LAST SEPTEMBER WHEN IT BRIEFED SELECTED  
MEDIA ON THE SOVIET OIL OUTLOOK.

THE SUIT WAS FILED IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA BY THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES FOUNDATION ON BEHALF OF THE  
ENERGY ACTION EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION.

THE CONSUMER GROUP, WHICH FAVORS PETROLEUM PRICE AND ALLOCATION  
CONTROLS, THINKS THE PUBLIC IS ENTITLED TO SEE THE CIA'S SUPPORTING  
DATA BECAUSE AGENCY PROJECTIONS OF IMMINENT OIL SHORTAGE WERE PIVOTAL  
IN THE DECISION TO PHASE OUT DOMESTIC OIL CONTROLS.

"THIS INFORMATION IS VITAL IN ORDER FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE ABLE TO  
DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT ANALYSES THE CIA IS MAKING REGARDING SOVIET  
ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS ARE RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE," SAID EDWIN  
ROTHSCHILD, DIRECTOR OF ENERGY ACTION. "TOO MANY TIMES, THE CIA HAS  
MADE PREDICTIONS OF SOVIET OIL PRODUCTION DECLINES THAT HAVE NOT  
PROVEN ACCURATE."

THE CIA HAS PROJECTED THAT THE SOVIET UNION, THE WORLD'S LARGEST  
OIL PRODUCER AND A NET EXPORTER, WOULD BE FORCED TO COMPETE WITH THE  
WEST IN AN INCREASINGLY TIGHT WORLD OIL EXPORTS MARKET BY ABOUT 1985.

IN THE PAST YEAR, HOWEVER, A SMALL GLUT HAS DEVELOPED ON THE WORLD  
OIL MARKET AS U.S. IMPORTS AND OVERALL OIL CONSUMPTION STARTED TO  
DECLINE.

ROTHSCHILD SAID HE WAS FORCED TO FILE THE DISCLOSURE SUIT "BECAUSE  
THE AGENCY REFUSED TO PROVIDE US WITH THE SAME INFORMATION THEY  
PROVIDED TO THE OIL & GAS JOURNAL AT A SECRET BRIEFING LAST  
SEPTEMBER."

JOHN JENNRICH, WASHINGTON EDITOR OF THE OIL AND GAS JOURNAL, SAID  
HE ATTENDED THE CIA BRIEFING BUT WOULD NOT COMMENT ON THE CONTENT.

ROTHSCHILD SAID WHEN FORMER PRESIDENT CARTER AND HIS ENERGY  
SECRETARY, JAMES SCHLESINGER, UNVEILED THEIR NATIONAL ENERGY PLAN IN  
APRIL 1977 THEY "RELIED EXTENSIVELY" ON THE CIA PROJECTIONS OF A  
COMING SHORTAGE AND DECLINING SOVIET PRODUCTION.

"WE HOPE THE INFORMATION THE CIA PROVIDED TO A SELECT GROUP OF  
ANALYSTS AND REPORTERS LAST SEPTEMBER WILL PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH AN  
INSIGHT AS TO HOW THE CIA ARRIVES AT ITS ESTIMATES OF SOVIET OIL